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SUBJECT: DRC-RWANDAN "4+4" COMMUNIQUE

¶1. (SBU) The DRC and Rwandan Foreign Ministers met in the "4+4" format in Kinshasa March 27-28. Embassy Kigali has obtained a copy of the joint communique from the meeting; the original English version is at paragraph 2. Most notably, the document reaffirms agreement between the ministers for an immediate exchange of ambassadors, for the two countries' Ministers of Justice to meet to formulate a legal framework for Laurent Nkunda's extradition, and for a Heads of State meeting.

¶2. (SBU) Begin text of communique:

Joint Communique

¶1. On March 27-28, 2009, the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the delegation of the Republic of Rwanda led respectively by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, His Excellency Alexis Thambwe Mwamba, and Honourable Rosemary Museminali, of Rwanda, met at the Congolese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kinshasa;

¶2. The meeting was a follow up of the previous bilateral meetings held in Kinshasa, Kigali, Goma and Rubavu respectively between the two countries;

¶3. The Head of the DRC delegation welcomed and thanked the Rwandan delegation for their participation in the meeting which demonstrates the importance they attach to the on-going process of re-establishing peace and stability in the region and the promotion of bilateral relations;

¶4. The Head of the Rwandan delegation expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to her delegation;

¶5. The meeting was briefed on the progress of military operations against ex-FAR/Interahamwe and the integration process of CNDP, PARECO and other armed groups in the FARDC after operation Umoja Wetu;

¶6. The two parties stressed the need to pursue ex-FAR/Interahamwe still scattered over the world;

¶7. The two parties agreed to set up a permanent joint sub-commission on defense and security in view to exchange information and act on security matters of common interest;

¶8. The two parties committed themselves to exchange their ambassadors immediately in view of advancing diplomatic relations;

¶9. The two parties recommended a meeting at the level of the Heads of State to consolidate the achievements of the ongoing bilateral talks between the two countries;

¶10. They discussed issues related to the common border. The two parties agreed that experts will meet April 16-18 to review the situation and provide recommendations on the way forward;

¶11. The 4+4 meeting noted the legal complexities in both the DRC and Rwanda regarding the transfer of Laurent Nkunda. They recommended that their respective ministers of justice meet and give the 4+4 legal advice on the issue.

Done at Kinshasa on the March 28, 2009 in English and French both languages being equally authentic. English remains the original language of the original text.

End text of communiqué.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Discussions about restoring diplomatic relations have been on-going since the initial 4+4 meeting in early December ¶2008. While this development is extremely welcome, the international community should continue to press the two countries to carry through with the process. It is unclear to us what the way forward is on the "Nkunda problem." We fully understand the complexities of any extradition process, but the Congolese political class remains eager to showcase the former CNDP leader in Kinshasa, while the Rwandans undoubtedly see advantages to keeping him in their custody. Despite these relatively minor differences, the overall balance in DRC-Rwandan relations is overwhelmingly positive.

It is even more so when considering that these two countries have until recently supported, tacitly or openly, groups working to destabilize each other. In less than four months, they have not only committed to restore diplomatic relations, but have designed and carried out a joint military operation to rid the region of many of its negative forces. End Comment.

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